

Claim 10. Method according to Claim 7, wherein the steam is passed through the valves or lines until the condensate of the steam exiting at the emptying apertures is free from hydrolytic degradation products of the polymer.

REMARKS

The application includes two sets of claims, one set of which is set forth as an "amended sheet", as is the practice during the International Stage.

In order to avoid any confusion as to which set of claims is being prosecuted, and to conform the claims to conventional format, Applicants have canceled all of the claims and provided new ones.

The new claim numbering begins with "5", as Applicants believe that the application, prior to entry of the Preliminary Amendment, includes the four claims of the amended sheet, and that the original five claims are no longer in the application, having been replaced by the amended sheet of claims during the International Stage.

For the record, Applicants emphasize that although the claims were amended, and, therefore, might be argued to have been amended for a reason substantially related to patentability, a fair reading of the amended claims will reveal that the departures from the previous claims were for clarification purposes only, and that Applicants did not narrow the claims in any material respect. Therefore, Applicants submit that the amended claims are entitled to the full range of equivalents.

Early and favorable action is earnestly solicited.

CONDITIONAL PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME

If any extension of time for this amendment is required, applicant requests that this be considered a petition therefore. Please charge the required petition fee to Deposit Account No. 14-1263.

ADDITIONAL FEE

Please charge any insufficiency of fee or credit any excess to Deposit Account No. 14-1263.

Respectfully submitted,

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I hereby certify that this paper is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as Express Mail, Label No. EV 015941217US to: BOX PCT, Hon. Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231 on December 17, 2001.

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